

¿Qué? Podcast, Season 2, Episode 9

Many thanks to listener Ryan V. for the transcript!

Simon: You can email us at El *gibberish* - there's your outtake!

Simon: Hello everyone! My name is Simon Hunter, I'm the editor of the English edition of EL PAÍS and this is "Qué!?" a podcast from EL PAÍS that likes to get nicely sunburned from the red-hot glare of the Spanish news. Whether you're seeking shade on the slopes of the Sierra, cooling off in your local swimming pool, or just locked indoors with the AirCon up to eleven, we are here for you. Confiad en nosotros. So sit back, relax and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say "Joder. Qué calor! Qué calor!"

As ever, I'm here with my esteemed colleague, Melissa Kitson. Hello Melissa.

Melissa: Hi Simon.

Simon: Did you notice a little theme in my introduction there?

Melissa: Weather. Hot weather.

Simon: The heat wave is here! How are you coping?

Melissa: Oh, I, I really feel there should be an app that tells you where there's shade. That's kind of a new initiative. I'm putting it out there.

Simon: You're, you know, you're Australian you should be past master at dealing with it. Not at this time of year obviously because right about now you'd be in your winter time. You were mentioning this morning you're coping better than your Spanish husband.

Melissa: Yes! That's true. I think he just likes to make drama.

Simon: Tell him to man up. Come on Juan, man up.

Melissa: Just a bit of 40 degree heat.

Simon: Yeah, well it's nothing. this is nothing! Alright, so this is episode 9 of season 2. We are now on the home straight to our summer vacations. A couple of weeks of podcasts left to go. As always, I invite you to rate our podcasts and leave a comment and share it on social media. We've got 18 ratings on

iTunes. 18! Count them. An average of 4.9 stars. I shall be having words with the person who gave us the four-star review.

Fernando in Madrid says “A fresh view. I love how foreigners see us. Great fun and buen rollo.” So thank you for that Fernando.

We’ve also got a review from a man named Culebron Chris. Now I know that is our friend of the show Chris Thompson. He didn’t write to us this week but he left us a review so thanks for that Chris. He says “Informative and amusing. I’ve been listening right since the beginning and Qué has become one of those small pleasures of my weekly routine. I like that it’s current and up to date. I like the way that fact and opinion are intermingled” – probably a little fiction in there as well – “I like the way the sound bites in Spanish are used but explained. And more than anything, I like the fact that the listeners are not patronized or talked down to.” (mocking voice) So thank you Chris, that’s such a nice way- Thank you Chris!

And then we got another review that says “Essential listening.” This is from Marina Viajera. “Just wish the podcast were longer” –Hmmm, that’s interesting Verónica – “Or just more than once a week. Every day would be ideal, or weekday so Simon and Melissa get the weekend off.”

Sound Bite: You’re crazy!

My word, Marina. It may not look like it, it may not sound like it, but we do put quite a lot of work in this so if we did one every day there would be no output on our website. There are just three of us after all. Last week I invited you to tweet Veronica @thisorteg and our friend who we mentioned last week @rgtzz, he did indeed tweet at Veronica. He said “Yes Veronica, make the @elpaisinenglish #quepodcast longer. #quelargo”

So thank you all for that lovely load of correspondence and reviews and whatnot. Do keep getting in touch, we love to hear from you. You can email at EnglishEdition@elpais.es or you can tweet me @simoninmadrid using the hashtag #quepodcast.

Alright. Melissa. What’ve we got this week? We’re going to start with very big news about the Running of the Bulls sexual assault case, so why don’t you tell us about that?

Melissa: Yeah, so, no sexual assault case is perhaps as well known in Spain as La Manada, or “the wolfpack”. The case refers to the trial of five men who raped an 18 year old woman at the Running of the Bulls festival in Pamplona. The victim was led into a doorway and forced to have sex with the five men who filmed the assault and stole her phone. She was later found crying on a bench. It became known as La Manada after the Whatsapp group the men used to boast about their sexual exploits. After an 11 month trial last year, a court in Navarra found that the men were guilty of sexual assault, but not

rape, ruling that no violence or intimidation was used against the victim, despite recognizing that she was stunned and unable to react. One judge on the three judge panel even wanted to acquit the men.

Sound bite

In the end, the men were sentenced to nine years in prison and released soon after on bail. The verdict sparked mass protests across Spain, with feminist groups arguing that it sends a message that victims had to risk their lives fighting off attackers in order to be believed by the courts. The verdict was later upheld at an appeals court in December of last year, and then it was taken to the Supreme Court. And on Friday, the Supreme Court delivered its ruling. The men were found guilty of rape and not the lesser charge of sexual abuse. The court found that there was a real sense of intimidation, and that at no point did the victim consent to a sexual act. The judges have raised the men's sentence from nine to fifteen years in prison and increased the compensation owed to the victim from 10,000 euros to 100,000 euros. This verdict has been celebrated by women groups across the country as a great victory.

Simon: Yeah, so for a lot of people, a great deal of relief over this ruling after the very widespread view that the original court that tried the case had very much got it wrong. There was that one judge you mentioned that judge who disagreed with the ruling. He used this really odd phrase, he said that the videos that were recorded of the sex acts, "showed sex acts in an atmosphere of revelry and delight", and this is not a very journalistic thing to point out, but he did really look like a very creepy guy that judge didn't he!? So that left a really bad taste in people's mouths that this ruling really had very much got it wrong, and also, it did prompt all of these calls for some sort of reform to Spain's laws covering sexual assault and rape.

And the fact that to suggest that this, you know, 18 year old girl would just willingly walk into a building lobby with five men that she had just met and engage in all kinds of sex acts that we won't go into here due to their graphic nature, but, with these men, it does kind of begger belief that this was the original ruling, which of course carried a lesser prison sentence. Also, something that people have been outraged about, is the fact that these five men have actually been out of prison. They've been released on bail while the, while the Supreme Court looked at the case. That seems incredibly surprising, but they had exceeded the amount of time they could be held in protective custody. I believe one of them was sent back to prison for stealing some sunglasses and getting in some altercation with the police.

They were all very quickly rounded up and arrested on Friday and now are facing a very long time in prison. And quite an opportune time when you've got parties such as Vox which are working to try and roll back legislation in Spain which is based on helping protect women from domestic violence or sexist violence I should say. In fact, there was this extraordinary reaction from Vox. One of the Vox chiefs down in Andalusia wrote this pretty amazing post on Facebook and he just said "Oh, well, the way we're going

the only safe sex is going to be, or risk-free sex is going to be sex betwe- you know, with a prostitute,” which is such a kind of twisted way to look at this ruling.

Vox has been vocal in another tweet, they were supporting the judge that I mentioned before, the one who said the sexual acts in an atmosphere of revelry and delight, and so for some reason they were able to back the judges in that original ruling but think that the Supreme Court has completely got this one wrong.

We haven't done it in English yet, but there was a very interesting piece by our colleague Isabel Valdés and she's examining the reasons why there seems to be this uptick in group sexual assaults. There's this – we've got how many cases? We've got 104 group sexual assaults that have been registered since the Running of the Bulls case happened, and in her article she – the experts, they put it down to the growing consumption of pornography by the, you know, ever younger children. We were talking about this last week weren't we, Melissa and I, being the father of two young boys it terrifies me that in Spain, kids as young as eight are so easily able to access pornography in a way that, you know, just has never been possible before. And all of this, the experts say, amplified by a sexist society.

Alright, so let's move on. I mean, we've mentioned Vox and I'm sure we're going to come back to them in just a second because we are still just in this state of flux when it comes to Spanish politics and in certain situations which don't look like they're going to get resolved anytime soon, certainly not this side of the summer. So why don't you tell us, Melissa, what on earth is going on.

Melissa: It's been nearly two months since the April 28th general election, and Spain is still no closer to forming a government. Indeed, if anything, the political luck has worsened. As we've explained before, Pedro Sánchez of the Socialist Party won the most number of seats at the April poll, but failed to secure an absolute majority. His party has 123 seats, but he needs 176 votes to be sworn in as prime minister in the first investiture vote, which may happen as soon as next Tuesday.

But it is still unclear where Sánchez is going to get these votes. Initially it seemed like the anti-austerity group Unidos Podemos would provide 42 of those votes, but negotiations between the two parties have since hit major stumbling blocks. Although Sánchez and the Unidos Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias announced they would agree to negotiate a “government of cooperation” they do not agree on what that means.

Iglesias is pushing to be part of the government and Sanchez is pushing back and saying that's not going to happen. The anti-austerity leader has threatened to not support Sanchez at the investiture vote. In the meantime, the center-right party Ciudadanos, or Citizens, is coming under increasing pressure to back Sánchez. Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera has point-blank refused to help Sánchez become re-elected as Prime Minister, but not everyone in his party is happy with his position. Three top Ciudadanos officials have recently resigned in protest over this point-blank refusal and also of the

party's shift to the right, particularly their dealings with far-right party Vox. The party spokesman for economic affairs, Toni Rolan

Sound Bite (translated): For a time, the direction of this party, which I belong to, has made a strategic decision, which is legitimate, but which I cannot share.

Ciudadanos has also been criticized by, you know, the very founders of the party for this really hardline approach, so there is some question marks about whether or not they would change their position in the face of all this internal conflict. There is the possibility that Spain could be heading to new elections for the fourth time since 2015.

Simon: Oh please no! yeah, so according to the reporting from our colleagues here at the paper, it seems like Pablo Iglesias is saying, you know, Sánchez is not going to get voted back in at the first investiture vote in July, which means we would have a second go in September. And then potentially new elections in November which is just – I think this is the problem: We've got this situation now where we've got this splintered political spectrum which were not used to in Spain. It used to be a two-party system. But these politicians, they have to get- they have to deals.

They have to get over themselves and sit down and hammer out, you know, negotiations, and they have to do it according the amount of votes and the amount of seats they've won in whatever election we're talking about. So, at the moment Vox is causing loads of problems in the Madrid region but is it doing it in a manner that's kind of properly related to the amount of support that it got at the polls. And the same with Podemos, I mean, can Podemos, with the amount of seats that it got, can it really be the one that's going to stop a leftist government from being formed? We need this to happen before the summer. Surely we can't let this drag out into the autumn.

But then again, you could say that all Sánchez has to do is give them their ministries, give Podemos their place in the ministries that they're calling for. But whatever happens, I mean, it's just not going to risk sort of massive voter fatigue. Are people not going to start getting really disenchanted – or even more than they are now – disheartened with their politicians and their political class. It just feeds into – you just end up with more, more, a bit like what happened with Brexit and people just getting more and more disappointed with what's going on and just that attitude of “ah all politicians are the same” and feeding off to parties like Vox.

I mean, Podemos is not exactly coming from a position of strength having lost so much support the last polls. And, just to mention what's going on in the Madrid region right now, we still haven't got a government on the horizon in the Madrid region because again it's going to come down to a deal between the PP, and Citizens, and Vox. Vox just this morning – we recorded this on Wednesday – has come out with its demands. It's kind of lowered its demands. It's not saying it wants to be in charge of areas now. It wants a parental pin so that parents can exclude their children from activities that go

against their convictions. I have no idea what that means? What does that mean? A parental pin? I guess that means they don't want them sitting in, I don't know, classes or activities that – because in Spain we have these alternatives to religion classes, you know Civic Studies and all that – or I don't know, being taught about LGBT matters. I assume they're, that's what they're talking about.

Also, in the Madrid region, they're demanding about a dozen articles from the laws that protect gay rights to be abolished. There's demands about unaccompanied migrant children who arrive in Madrid to be immediately sent back to their country of origin, or for countries to pay for health treatment for illegal migrants. So, very much in the line for the policies that they've been coming up with. But, you know, this is the thing: If the PP and Citizens, they want to, they want to form a government with Vox they're going to have to bend somewhere. And Citizens is the party that's in the strangest position because they seem to be happy to enter into deals with Vox for the sake of getting into government but not on a- not publicly, not you know, publicly sitting down with them or publicly admitting what's going on. They kind of want to keep them at arm's distance. They're happy to do, you know, go into deals with them but keeping them at a sort of distance which seems bizarre and I think it's probably costing them the most political capital, so who knows what will happen if we go through this, you know, turbulent summer where there's no agreement in Congress and potentially in regions as well because there's still regional governments like Madrid to be formed. It'll be really interesting to see what that does for Citizens at the polls. And then at the same time, just as a sort of side note, we've got all sorts of stuff kicking off in Madrid City Hall. We already mentioned last week about Madrid central, the anti-emissions zone being rolled back and now we've got accusations against the new Madrid City Hall that they're kind of tampering with the banners they've got going up about gay pride. Gay pride this year is kind of doing a big campaign about the people, the activists in the past who had to struggle with being homosexual under the Franco regime and the oppression and the arrests and in some cases the torture they were subjected to under the Franco regime, and really this campaign is kind of a tribute to the sort of the trailblazers who were here first, and it looks like the PP has been tampering with these banners and not all the banners have been going up where they're supposed to be around City Hall. We're in some pretty strange times, not least because of the influence that Vox is starting to have in the various political arenas across the country.

Alright, well, we shall wrap that up there. Quite serious. I feel very serious yes, so we'll come back with some silly news next week. Some lighter stuff next week. I mean, it used to mean that summer was the silly season and nothing ever happened but that doesn't seem to be the case anymore, so we'll see where we are next week and what we can bring you.

Alright, well this is the end of episode 9. My name is Simon Hunter.

Melissa: I'm Melissa kitson.

Simon: and this was ¿Qué?, a podcast that tries to explain what happens in Spain to some of us who sometimes get a little bit lost in translation. This is an EL PAÍS production. It was recorded right here in the EL PAÍS newsroom under the expert guidance of our producer Veronica Figueroa who is very flexible with her timings. You can listen to our podcast on your favorite podcast app. You can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google assistant. We'll be back next week with a whole new host of issues. Thank you for listening. Adiós!

Melissa: Ciao!